

Atlantic Coast Line Building
6th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-394

HABS
DC,
WASH,
324-

PHOTOGRAPH

ADDITIONAL
FOLIOS...

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Addendum to:
Atlantic Coastline Building
601 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington
District of Columbia

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The six-story Atlantic Coastline Building is located on Lot 800, an irregularly-shaped site on the acute southeast corner of Square 460. Frontage is approximately 38' along Pennsylvania Avenue and 90' along Sixth Street. The building covers the entire site and presents two prominent cylindrical bay projections at each end of its Sixth Street facade. It is six stories high and has a full basement.

The structure is steel framed, with floor slabs composed of clay tile flat arches that span steel I-beams. The finished wood flooring rests on sleepers, which in turn lie on a bed of sand above the structural slab.

The first two floors of the facade consist of rock-faced rusticated piers which, on the second floor, frame round-arched fenestration. The next three floors are of yellow brick, articulated by dual belt courses of red terra-cotta at sill and lintel level. The top level is set off at the sill level by a tall belt course with a fret relief. A bold projecting cornice supported by modillions crowns the building's two elevations.

Designed for hotel use, the building has retained its original interior layout with few alterations. A central open stairwell occurs along the west wall, with a corridor around the open space giving access to the offices that line the building's perimeter along the north, east and south. An open-cage elevator rises from first through sixth floors along the eastern side of the corridor.

Original or early finishes are still in place, mostly in good condition. The exception is the sixth floor, which presents considerable water damage due to faulty roofing and broken window glazing.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1892-1893, the Atlantic Coastline Building was designed by the prominent Washington architect James G. Hill. The builder was W. E. Speir. (Building Permit #2081, 4/19/1892.) Prior to 1892, Hill had been under the strong influence of H. H. Richardson, and the Romanesque forms are still evident in this structure.

The design is rich in both form and usage of facade materials. The forceful vertical articulation of the different levels of the building is successful in achieving a logical progression from heavy at the base to light at the top.

The cylindrical bays of the Atlantic Coastline Building visually interact with the similar features of the Central National Bank Building at the western end of Square 460 and create strong anchors for this block of Pennsylvania Avenue.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Facades: The two facades are dynamically integrated through the fluid form of the cylindrical bay on the building's southeast corner and the continuity of belt courses in metal, brick and terra-cotta that sweep uninterrupted through the facades. On Pennsylvania Avenue, there are three window bays and five between the two projecting bays on Sixth Street. The rise of the facades is clearly articulated into three stacked volumes. The rusticated base is two stories high and terminates on a tall metal beltcourse at the sill of the third floor windows. Further articulation between the first and second floor is provided by a secondary metal beltcourse. The first and second floor is provided a fenestration rhythm established by rusticated piers on the east facade and by Tuscan pilasters on the south facade and the projecting bays. The second floor openings are all round arches. Currently, the integrity of the two floors as a single composition is disrupted by white paint on the first floor.

The third, fourth and fifth levels constitute the middle volume. The predominant material is yellow brick. On the lower two levels windows are square headed, round-arched on the fifth floor. Terra-cotta beltcourses occur at the lintel level of the third and fourth floors and at the sill of the fourth and fifth. In this midsection, the spacing of the window bays on the southeastern tower does not correspond to the fenestration rhythm of the base. The sixth level is designed as a classical attic. Windows of this top level rest on a band of ornamental relief fret in brick that carries terra-cotta beltcourses above and below. The interfenestration at this level is in yellow brick and has recessed panels set in a terra-cotta egg-and-dart frame. The building is crowned by a deep denticulated cornice supported by modillions. The silhouette of the cornice is enriched by antefix.

The main entrance to the building is centered on the Pennsylvania Avenue facade. The doors are recessed inside a slightly projecting Doric portico supported on each side by quarter-engaged Roman Doric unfluted columns.

Interior: The first floor consists of shops along the east and south sides of the building. A central hall leads from the main entrance on Pennsylvania Avenue to the elevator in the center of the building on the east and to a cast iron stair which ascends

through an open well along the west side of the building. The second through sixth floors are divided into rooms on the north, east, and south sides of the building. All rooms on the south and east open into the hall and are also connected internally by doorways. Most of the original woodwork, including mantels in the southwest and northeast rooms on each floor, is intact and in good condition. A severely deteriorated roof has resulted in water damage to plaster and floor boards on the upper floors. With the exception of its roof, the building appears to be structurally sound.